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EDU 402

Background Statement

As far back as I can remember, the expectations of the educational system for the students continually improved on my way through middle school into high school. It was unfortunate that I would be placed at a disadvantage heading into high school because I attended a Christian academy school where expectations for students were not high at all. Class sizes were under ten students from grades K-12 and many students had parents or guardians working as teachers or staff members working at the school. It seemed that many students were able to coast by just because who their parents were. Most of the time, students would get away with playing games in the computer lab instead of attending classes, and because the school grounds were so large and spread out it was not difficult for students to get out of sight and escape class without any repercussions. Transitioning back into public school for high school was much more difficult academically than socially. I was placed in an applied algebra class, as well as the lowest level classes for both science and history. Over the course of my high school career, and a new raised expectation for education, I was able to move up to more advanced classes by my junior and senior year.

The role businesses played having an expectation on education typically went by unnoticed throughout most of my education, though during high school I was always aware that many local businesses would sponsor many of my schools sporting events as well as extracurricular activities like talent shows. Most recently an organization "Fields for our Future," created in my hometown, renovated the football and soccer fields and turned them into turf. The expectations from my parents for my education were very high. The biggest reason being that I lived in a home in which having a good education was placed at high value. My mother has been teaching for many years, beginning as an Ed. Tech at an elementary school near the town I lived in, and she always made a point to keep track of how I was doing in school and always making sure I was getting the best education that I could be getting. Now she is happily teaching fifth grade at a small private school. My parents also always made it a point to attend anything and everything that I was a part of at school from National Honor Society down to each and every one of my teacher conferences.

As for myself, I always cared strongly about being successful in school because I enjoyed being there. I enjoyed all aspects of school, the social aspects as well as the educational. I always put forth my best effort in classes because I was brought up with the mindset that it was important to be successful in school, not to mention that almost all of my friends had very similar attitudes towards school. I had straight A's all the way until high school and then maintained a good honor roll standing in high school. In elementary and middle school the physical setup of the classrooms were always the same. Individual desks facing the front of the room where the teacher's desk was located as well as the chalkboard. Once in high school, the physical layouts of classrooms began to change. Many teachers took advantage of the "U" shaped table layout because it offered the opportunity for full-class discussions in which everyone would feel apart of. Most of my science classes however continued to use a frontward facing layout that had everyone's attention fixed on the overhead projector.

I had teachers that used a variety of different strategies when teaching, as well as teachers who would use the same strategy every day. I would attend class in which the only thing we would do is wait for the teacher to write the answers to the previous nights homework on the board and then we would grade our own work with pen, and then spend the last twenty minutes rushing to learn something new for the next nights homework assignment. It was monotonous, boring, and unsuccessful. I also had teachers who took advantage of using many different teaching strategies such as cooperative learning as well as incorporating technology and making sure to reach out to a majority of the multiple intelligences. The strategies that met my needs usually involved working with other students because I detested being put on the spot with a question by a teacher without the opportunity to think about my answer or at least talk about it with a partner or small group. I found the most joy in school during my history classes. I came into each class always expecting to hear and learn about something different because history is such a broad topic in school. I also would always look forward to the books that were to be read in my English classes because I knew that we would only be reading out of large textbooks for my other courses. One of my favorite teachers was my AP US History teacher. He was so enthusiastic about history and he always made it a point to have a conversation with each student in each of his classes every class period. We would have debates in class, watch informative films have strong discussions, make maps, take field trips, and it was always extremely enjoyable. Looking back at this particular teacher, I realize how much he actually cared for each of his student’s education.

As far as socioeconomic levels, most students fell under the working class, low-middle class, or regular middle class. A lot of students, myself included, qualified for free lunch every day. I'm unsure of everyone's ethnicity in the student body, but from what I can remember it was pretty diverse because the school I attended accepted students from five boarding towns that contained some ancestral diverse ethnicities. Classes and programs were structured basically the same. All throughout my education I had the same classes and attended the same programs with the same group of other students, it was almost as if students were grouped together throughout high school starting with freshman year when we were split up into three different "teams." I was placed in an applied algebra class, as well as the lowest level classes for both science and history. Over the course of my high school career, I was able to move up to more advanced classes by my junior and senior year.

When I approach teaching as a professional career I will be able to look back on my own education and see what worked and what did not work for me as a student. I will be able to change the things that I did not enjoy during my classroom experiences. I can look at the mistakes that I made as a student and I can push my students not to make those same mistakes. I have chosen teaching because it has been apart of my life since I was born. Having a mother for a teacher, spending time with her in her classroom and seeing her enjoyment always fascinated me. I made strong connections and bonds with a few of my teachers throughout my education that inspired me to turn to teaching as a profession. A superior teacher can be categorized as being kind and enthusiastic about the subject they teach. They need to enjoy learning because it is their job to show students the importance of learning and having an education. I plan on showing my students how much I enjoy the subjects of social studies as soon as they walk in my classroom. From the layout of the room to the decorations on the wall, I want them to see the passion that I have to be a teacher.

I hope that I will continue to learn once I become a teacher, I hope that I am able to have fun with my career because it is what I really want to do. I want students to leave my room feeling like they have actually understood what I have taught them and for them to appreciate the knowledge and use it in their own lives. I hope to contribute passion and youth to the profession. I want to join organizations and attend conferences in which I can continue to expand my teaching knowledge and skills. I fear that I will not be ready to face a classroom by myself. I am worried that I will get tired of the profession too soon. I wonder if I will be able to find a job close to home? I fear that I will not capture student’s imagination in the same way my favorite history teacher caught mine. I worry that the long after school planning and work will burn me out to quickly.